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Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention

Thirteenth to fifteenth periodic reports of States parties due in 2013

Suriname*

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I. Introduction

1. Suriname became a party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by succession on 15 March 1976. Pursuant to article 9 of the Convention, Suriname has already submitted two reports covering the initial to the twelfth reports.

2. In the present periodic report, the Republic of Suriname will outline what has been achieved since the consideration of its last report, highlight the challenges to the full enjoyment of the rights under the Convention and spell out the measures decided on by the public authorities to overcome them. This report covers the period from 2006 to July 2013.

3. In accordance with the reporting guidelines for States parties, this consolidated periodic report, containing in a single document, the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth reports, is divided into two main parts.

4. The first part, "General information and responses to the concerns and recommendations of the Committee", describes the general political structure of the country, recalls the framework in which human rights are promoted and protected. It also contains the responses of the Republic of Suriname to the prevention of racial discrimination, including early warning measures and urgent action procedures, and to the recommendations formulated by the Committee in its previous concluding observations (CERD/C/SUR/CO/12).

5. The second part of the report contains information regarding substantive provisions of the Convention in regard to which changes have occurred in the Republic, and the closing remarks and the conclusion.

II. General information and response to the concerns and recommendations of the Committee

General information

6. Suriname is a constitutional democracy, with a President elected by the unicameral National Assembly or by the larger United People's Assembly. After generally free and fair legislative elections, several political alliances have formed a coalition Government for the last decade.

7. Chapter XI of the Constitution of Suriname discusses the legislative power which is jointly exercised by the National Assembly and the Government, while Chapter XIII, section 2, and Chapter XXI, respectively discuss the executive power which is vested in the President and the regional administrations.

8. Chapter XV discusses the judicial power, formed by the President and Vice-President of the High Court, the judges, the Procurator-General, Attorney-General and the Public Prosecutors.

9. It can be stated that human rights and fundamental freedoms are guaranteed and protected by the Constitution.

10. Suriname is party to a lot of United Nations human rights and regional human rights instruments, which were already mentioned in its first report.

11. In this report, the focus will be on indigenous peoples and Maroons, and not on other ethnic groups of which Suriname consists, since members of the other ethnic groups have never launched a formal complaint of discrimination on any basis.

12. The two tribal groups in Suriname are the indigenous peoples, totalling 20,344 people (3.8% of the population); and the Maroons, totalling 117,567 people (21.7%), of which recognition of their collective rights is the challenge in Suriname.

Response to the prevention of racial discrimination and to the Committee's previous recommendations

13. In 2005 and 2007, the Inter-American Court on Human Rights (IACtHR) issued judgments on the same subject-matter as the early warning measures. The Government of Suriname is in the process of implementing both judgments of the above-mentioned Court with the participation of the relevant stakeholders. In June 2012, a delegation reported to the IACtHR about the implementation of the Moiwana judgment.

14. On 28 May 2013, a high level delegation reported to the IACtHR on the implementation of the judgment in the case of the Samaaka peoples. They explained the complexity in implementing the judgment such as, among other things, the composition of Suriname's population which could not be compared with other states with the same challenges. The delegation consists of not only government officials, but also officials who are members of the Samaaka community themselves. The agent in this case has been replaced by a member of the Samaaka community. The delegation stressed the fact that a lot of members of the Maroon community had high positions in the administration e.g. ministers of five ministries are all Maroons (see para 44). The IACtHR proposes to Suriname to establish a commission, consisting of government officials and members of the tribal people to solve this problem and set a timeline.

15. From 13 to 16 March 2011, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous people, James Anaya, visited Suriname in the context of a request by the Government of Suriname and its Ministry of Regional Development for technical and advisory assistance as it develops the legislative and administrative measures necessary to secure the territorial and other rights of the indigenous and tribal peoples of Suriname.

16. Mr. Anaya met with relevant stakeholders and made some observations, recommendations and suggestions about the basic contents of legislation, while emphasizing that this legislation should be the outcome of a participatory process, assisted by relevant international institutions, in which indigenous and tribal peoples are themselves involved.

17. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (Commissioners Dinah Shelton, Tracy Robinson and the Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) undertook a working visit to the Republic of Suriname between January 23 and 25, 2013 in order to examine the situation of the rights of among other things indigenous peoples.

18. These Commissioners met with relevant stakeholders such as the representatives from civil society dedicated to the defense of the rights of indigenous peoples. The rapporteurs recognized the steps already adopted by the State to comply with these Inter-American Court judgments.

19. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights highlighted the recommendations issued by the United Nations organs on concrete ways to comply with these judgments in the areas of demarcation and titling, and the development of a law and procedure to carry out this goal.

20. The State informs the Committee that the draft legislation to establish the Constitutional Court is in the last phase of adoption by the National Assembly.

21. The State once again wants to highlight that article 106 of the Constitution grants the Judiciary full competence to rule in cases when domestic legislation is incompatible with the Constitution or with human rights provisions of any Convention.

III. Information on articles 1 to 7 of the Convention

Article 1: General provisions

22. The Republic of Suriname is bound by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the charters of regional organizations. Suriname's policy is based on non-discrimination and combating racial discrimination.

23. The country's Constitution provides the framework for its policy of combating racial discrimination. Laws have been enacted to give effect to the promotion of the principle of non-discrimination and equality before the law of citizens and foreign nationals.

24. The Republic of Suriname is a sovereign and democratic State founded on human dignity and the promotion of human rights and freedoms.

25. As stated in the previous report and reaffirm by the Committee in their concluding observations is that the definition of racial discrimination in the Convention has been adopted by the Criminal Code and the Constitution, which unequivocally states in article 8 that "no one shall be discriminated against on grounds of birth, sex, race, language, religion, education, political opinion, economic position or any other status".

26. Racial discrimination in the Criminal Code states in article 126 that discrimination shall mean any distinction, restriction or preference which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

27. Other articles in chapters V and VI of the Constitution, discussing fundamental rights, make no distinction between individuals, indicating that all individuals have the same rights.

28. Pursuant to article 1, section 2, of the Convention, the State has adopted several acts indicating distinctions or restrictions between citizens and non-citizens. The Election Act, for example, only gives Surinamese citizens the right to vote and to be elected in high governmental and administrative positions.

29. Citizens can be elected as members of the National Assembly, members of the judiciary, members of the executive branch, etc. These acts are in compliance with the Convention and are not considered racial discrimination.

30. The Surinamese Nationality and Citizenship Act gives provisions regarding nationality, citizenship and naturalization of individuals. This act does not discriminate against any particular nationality but gives objective norms/standards that must be complied with before an individual can receive Surinamese nationality. Based on the Constitution, this must be done by an act of the National Assembly.

31. The Preamble of the Constitution states: "Convinced of our duty to respect and safeguard the principles of freedom, equality and democracy as well as the fundamental human rights and freedoms". With this citation from its Constitution, the State

demonstrates its commitment with regard to the equality principle and the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms in a democratic society.

32. Individual civil and political rights in Suriname are established mainly by the Constitution of the Republic of Suriname. The current Constitution was adopted by a public referendum in 1987, and was amended in 1992. Even though the Constitution does not mention the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it was clearly inspired by this Declaration. Chapter 1 of the Constitution is devoted in its entirety to the basic civil, political, economic and social rights of the individual.

33. In addition to chapter I, the Constitution includes provisions that relate to the rights specified in the Convention. The Surinamese people have the right of self-determination. With this right fully exercised, the people established a political system that tends to give them the possibility to freely pursue economic, social and cultural development for each individual and for the nation as a whole. As reflected in article 1 of its Constitution, the Republic of Suriname is a democratic State based on the principles of sovereignty (self-determination) of the people and safeguarding the basic rights and freedoms of individuals. Chapters 5 and 6 of the Constitution give rules concerning equal protection of citizens. Reference is made to articles 8 to 39 that safeguard fundamental and social rights of citizens of the Republic of Suriname.

34. The population of Suriname consists of various ethnic groups which continue to speak their own languages, enjoy the culture of their native countries and are permitted to do so freely. Suriname is the world in miniature, consisting of Hindustani - 148,443 (27.4%), Creoles - 84,933 (15.7%), Javanese - 73,975 (13.7%), Maroons - 117,567 (21.7%), Chinese - 7,885 (1.5%), Indigenous peoples - 20,344 (3.8), Afro-Surinamese - 3,923 (0.7%), Mixed Race - 72,340 (13.4%), Caucasians - 1,667 (0.3%), Other - 7,166 (1.3%), No race - 1,805 (0.3%), No answer - 1,590 (0.3%) (based on the 2013 Census).

35. Suriname's cultural policy is based on the plurality of the Suriname population. The policy is therefore based on cultural democracy, which is characterized by the equality of all cultures and mutual acceptance and appreciation of one another's cultural expressions. Suriname's cultural policy recognizes article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and also aims at having every individual participate in full freedom in the cultural life of the community, for him or her to enjoy art, be part of scientific progress and its outcomes.

36. Furthermore, every person has the right to protection of his or her spiritual and material interests, that ensue from scientific, literary or artistic creations which he/she has produced. The Government of Suriname has not yet adopted special measures to secure adequate advancement of certain racial or ethnic groups or individuals that require protection.

37. Since education forms an integral part of the cultural development of individuals and groups, the State wishes to state the following. The main objective of financing education is the provision of educational facilities at all levels, for all members of Suriname society regardless of race, sex, religion, and financial status. Educational financing is also a means to promote and guarantee the freedom of education.

38. In Suriname, education is free of charge. There is also a fellowship programme available for students at second and third-level institutions. Students at first-level institutions receive financing of material, e.g. textbooks and pencils, from the Government. However, fellowships and additional financing for students at senior secondary level are provided for those whose parents are unable to do so. Transportation for students is also provided for by the Government.

39. Education for children in the interior: the following districts are counted as interior: Brokopondo, Marowijne, Sipaliwini, East and West Para, Santigron in Wanica and Kalebaskreek in Saramacca. Schools in the interior could be divided into Maroon areas and indigenous areas.

40. There are a total of 92 schools in the interior, including the annexes. Seventeen are in a homogenic indigenous area, 66 schools in a homogenic Maroon area and 9 schools in Moengo and Albina, of which 70% is Maroon area. See the annex[1] for the number of students in the interior. The number of teachers in the interior is 810. There are 602 (74%) qualified teachers and 208 (26%) unqualified teachers.

41. The language which is used to instruct the students is the official language, but unofficially students in the kindergarten and those of the first up to the third grade are instructed in their mother tongue. There is no policy yet to introduce the mother tongue as official language in school.

42. One of the innovative strategies for addressing the problems in the interior is the establishment of a so-called "nucleus centre". In collaboration with other ministries, and particularly the Ministry of Regional Development, a nucleus system is introduced in which an educational centre is set up in Albina and Moengo.

43. Despite the fact that the children in the interior face more obstacles than children elsewhere, there is a growing number of children from the interior that are able to attend higher education in the districts and in Paramaribo. The number of students attending high school and the university is increasing annually. This is an indication that there is an improvement in this matter. The Government of the Republic of Suriname will continue to work on the improvement of the system.

44. It is also worth mentioning that the number of Maroons and indigenous people who participate in daily life, and have staff positions in the community, is increasing steadily. The current administration, which consists of 17 Ministries, five ministerial posts are held by Maroons such as: the Ministries of Finance, of Regional Development, of Transport, Communication and Tourism, of Social Affairs and of Justice and Police. Of the 51 members of the National Assembly, nine men and one woman are Maroons, while two men are indigenous. This is again an indication of the efforts of the Government. However, the Government realizes that there still is a lot to be done in this respect.

45. With regard to environmental issues on traditional ground, the State adopts measures to prevent mercury to run off near indigenous communities. There are two kinds of gold mining in Suriname, the large scale gold mining which is currently done by international mining companies and the small scale mining which is much more widespread and done by individuals. In the small scale gold mining mercury is used to extract the gold from the soil. The practice is limited to a certain part of Suriname that starts in the north-west of the country and expands downwards towards the southern border. The main characteristics of small-scale gold mining in Suriname can be described as follows:

(i) Not always in possession of a license or permit;

(ii) The use of heavy machinery;

(iii) No consideration for environmental and social aspects, such as deforestation and water pollution;

(iv) Illega' foreigners, such as Brazilians, work the gold mines; and

[1] The annex can be consulted in the files of the secretariat.

(v) The use of large amounts of mercury.

46. The Government recognizes that the small-scale gold mining has many negative impacts on surrounding environment and communities and has therefore recently implemented some measures to combat this problem.

47. The Geological and Mining Institution of the Ministry of Natural Resources implemented a project entitled "Gold mining pollution abatement", which lasted from 2003 to 2006. The objectives of the project:

(i) Improved management of the small to medium scale gold mining sector in order to reduce pressure exerted on priority ecosystem of Suriname, funding by the W.W.F.;

(ii) Promoting the use of retort in the small scale gold mining sector.

48. Current development in the gold mining sector:

(i) The President has installed a commission for the reforming and regulating the illegal small scale gold mining activities in Suriname;

(ii) The establishment of Mining Service Center (MSC) in several parts in the interior for registration of the miners and providing service to them. One MSC has started its activities as a pilot project in the eastern part of the country;

(iii) The starting of a school of mining and mineral processing to train workers in the mining sector to use mercury free technique for mining.

49. With regard to health care in the interior, the State declares the following: according to article 36 of the Constitution there is no racial discrimination. Everyone has equal rights and this includes the public health and medical care. This is also one of the targets of the Ministry of Public Health.

50. The Medical Mission provides medical care in the interior and the Regional Health Services in the coastal area in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and everyone has equal access to public health.

51. With regard to access to health services, there is no distinction as to age, sex or ethnicity. There is a complete health care system in the interior, 50 fully staffed clinics which are responsible for the healthcare service to all people irrespective of age, sex and ethnicity. There are also mobile eyecare units which regularly visit the people of the interior. In January 2014, the Government is going to introduce a national medical insurance policy for everybody in the country. As of July 1, 2013 this policy covers everyone up to 16 years and from 60 years and older.

52. The State also refers to the World AIDS 2012 report. The region with the sharpest declines in number of new HIV infections is the Caribbean where there has been a drop of more than 42%. In Suriname, the rate of new HIV infections fell by 86%. The countries of the Caribbean experienced a 48% decline in AIDS-related deaths, while in Oceania the drop was 41%. Suriname saw a more than 40% reduction. (Source: UNAIDS 2012 Global Report.)

53. Employment in the interior: measures which have been taken at this time with regards to recruitment and conditions of employment of workers belonging to indigenous and tribal peoples in order to improve and strengthen the local communities' employability and income (revenues) are: the promotion of entrepreneurship in the agriculture sector among the indigenous and tribal peoples in the districts Sipaliwini (Apoera, Washabo and Section), Brokopondo and Marowijne by the Foundation for Productive Working Units of the Ministry of Labour.

54. Apoera, Washabo and Section: establishment of a production unit where local women deposit their products to be sold. In the district of Marowijne, local women are encouraged to cultivate products (ginger and araceae) which are suitable for the soil conditions in that area. The foundation provides guidance and training in cultivation of the crops and cost price calculation. In the district of Brokopondo, farmers are encouraged to produce vegetables to meet the demands of the mining companies in the area. Training in the cultivation of crops and price calculation are offered. The promotion of cooperatives in agriculture is offered by the Board Cooperatives. The Board's goal is to encourage entrepreneurs (e.g. farmers, miners) to establish cooperatives to save costs for production and taking advantage of collective market entry. The Board has been active in Sipaliwini (West Suriname, Apoera, Washabo and Section) and the villages along the upper-Suriname River.

55. Recurrent vocational training in electromechanics, plumbing, mechanics, construction and textile in the districts of Marowijne (Albina) and Sipaliwini (Godo, Kampu and Nieuw Aurora) by the Foundation of Labour Mobilization and Development:

- Albina, Marowijne, Textile, electromechanics, plumbing, 2011;
- Godo, Sipaliwini, Textile, construction, 2009;
- Kampu, Sipaliwini, Textile, construction, 2009;
- Nieuw Aurora, Sipaliwini, Textile, electromechanics, mechanics, 2009.

Article 2: Prohibition of racist practices and promotion of effective measures to integrate racial groups or persons belonging to such groups

56. According to the text of articles 175 and 176 (b) of the current Criminal Code there is no express prohibition on organizations which promote and incite racial discrimination. However, according to article 188 of the Criminal Code, participation in an organization that aims at committing any criminal offence is prohibited. It should also be stated that according to the above mentioned articles persons that commit such acts of discrimination are individually punishable.

57. It is to be noted that the establishment of organizations which are aimed to promote and incite racial discrimination cannot be established under Surinamese law.

Article 3: Combating apartheid and racial discrimination

58. Racism and racial discrimination are foreign to the Surinamese society. The Constitution contains different principles that are laid down in international human rights conventions:

(a) Equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of birth, sex, race, language, religion, origin, education, political convention, economic position or social conditions or any other status (art. 8 of the Constitution);

(b) The right to an equal and public treatment of a complaint within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial judge in case of violation of rights and freedoms (arts. 10, 11 and 12);

(c) Article 7 of chapter IV states, inter alia, that the Republic of Suriname promotes solidarity and collaboration with other peoples in combating colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism and genocide, and in the fight for national liberation, peace and social progress.

59. In chapter V, article 8 regarding individual rights and freedom states:

(a) All who are within the territory of Suriname shall have an equal claim to protection of person and property;

(b) No one shall be discriminated against on grounds of birth, sex, race, language, religion, education, political opinion, economic position or any other status.

60. The Republic of Suriname accordingly acceded to a number of international instruments to combat discrimination and apartheid, including the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, ratified on 3 June 1980.

Article 4: Punishing incitement and commission of racist acts and racist propaganda

61. Notwithstanding the fact that discriminatory practices are a phenomenon that has its roots outside Surinamese society, which is fundamentally opposed to any form of racial, religious or cultural segregation.

62. The Criminal Code distinguishes, inter alia, two categories of criminal offences. In the first category the society - as a community of individuals - is central and the offences comprise acts, which yield a violation of rights and interests of the society that are protected by law. In the second category the individual is central and this category contains acts which yield a violation of rights and freedoms of the individual, his person or property.

63. All criminal offences, which refer to violations of human rights and freedoms, as contained in international instruments, are punishable according to Surinamese criminal law. Criminal offences such as murder, manslaughter, abuse, kidnapping, detention, rape, insult and unlawful entry are criminal offences, which have to do with human rights in the sense that they involve - physically and emotionally - human beings. Other offences such as embezzlement, corruption, counterfeiting, sabotage, treason and destruction of utilities were added as criminal offences to protect the interests of society in its entirety with a view to security, stability and peace and to bring order in interests and promote confidence in business.

Article 5 (a): Right to equal treatment before the tribunals and all other organs administering justice

64. Having ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocol thereto, along with the American Convention on Human Rights of 1969, Suriname offers to its citizens and to all persons under its jurisdiction the possibility of exercising this right within the framework of the procedures in force.

65. Equality before the law is a constitutional right that does not allow any restriction or distinction on grounds of race, colour or national or ethnic origin. It should be noted that nationals as well as foreigners in civil and in criminal proceedings, automatically benefit from the assistance of an interpreter when necessary, and a lawyer in all cases, as the right of defence is guaranteed by the Constitution.

66. The Government and its agents do not commit arbitrary or unlawful killings. Authorities investigated all killings by police and security forces and brought charges where appropriate. The Personnel Investigation Department (OPZ), is the office within the Police Departn.ent which investigates offences committed by members of the police. From 2009 to March 2013, 159 investigations have been carried out.

Article 6: Right to remedies and reparation through the courts

67. The remedies through the courts consists of compensation, reparations and rehabilitation. Article 10 of the Constitution safeguards that everyone, feeling that his rights and freedoms have been infringed, has the right to an honest and public hearing of his complaint within a reasonable period and by an independent and impartial judge.

68. Article 11 of the Constitution states that no person may be withdrawn against his own will from the judge whom the law assigns to him. The authorities in Suriname always enforce the judgment given by the judicial authorities.

69. If one does not agree with the decision of the judge in the first instance, or after having gone through the hierarchy within the Administration, one may appeal to the High Court of Justice. The High Court will also function as the civil service tribunal. Furthermore it may be said that the guarantees, as included in articles 10, 11 and 16, paragraph 2, of the Constitution, are in effect.

70. Article 12 of the Constitution guarantees that everyone has the right to legal assistance, while the financially weak are entitled to "free" legal aid, at least legal aid that is paid by the State.

71. Separate statutory regulations contain provisions regulating the ways for individuals who are financially incapable of paying the costs of legal assistance.

72. The Government pays the costs of a lawyer for these individuals. Furthermore, the Government has a special department at the Ministry of Justice and Police, the Legal Care Unit/Section (*Afdeling Rechtszorg*), which is to provide legal advice to persons who cannot pay the costs of legal aid. This unit/section is mainly concerned with an array of civil matters (tenancy agreements, employment matters, family law matters such as adoption, guardianship, change of name, etc.

73. In order to lower the threshold for the financially weak, the Ministry of Justice and Police is working on some new models. The administrative procedures to qualify for free legal aid will have to be reduced considerably. This matter has the attention of the Government.

74. Article 16, paragraph 1, of the Constitution reads: "Everyone has the right to personal freedom and safety." Paragraph 2: "No one shall be deprived of his freedom on grounds and in accordance with procedures as laid down in the law." Paragraph 3: "Everyone who has been deprived of his freedom has the right to a treatment that is in accordance with human dignities."

75. Article 10 of the Constitution reads: Everyone has in case of infringement of his rights and freedoms, a claim to a fair and public hearing of his complaint within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial judge.

76. At present, cases are brought before the judge within a reasonable time. There is some backlog in the processing of criminal and civil cases, which is due in part to a shortage of judges entrusted with the administration of justice. Currently Suriname has 16 judges and 8 judges in training.

77. Article 11 of the Constitution: No person may be withdrawn against his will from the judge whom the law has assigned to him.

78. Article 27, paragraph 1, of the Constitution states that the State is obliged to safeguard the right to work as much as possible by seeing to it that equal chances are given in choice of profession and type of work. At the same time it prohibits hindrance in the performance of work or profession on the ground of sex.

79. Article 35, paragraph 1, of the Constitution guarantees the protection of the family. Paragraph 2 provides that man and woman are equal before the law. Article 45 of the Constitution stipulates that the social order in principle rests upon a society where all Surinamese people have the same rights and obligations.

80. The Department of Social Affairs and Housing deals among others with children's matters. In this respect this Department works in close cooperation with several NGOs in the community as well as with international organizations. For example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been published several times to increase the awareness of these rights among citizens of Suriname. In 2010, the Government increased the child allowance.

81. The fundamental human rights of an individual are safeguarded in articles 8 to 23 of the Constitution. The right to respect the individual's private life, family, home, his honour, good name and other rights specified in this article, are acknowledged in article 17 of the Constitution.

82. No one's place of abode shall be entered other than by order of an authority who is authorized by law to give such an order, and with due observance of the law. The secrecy of letters, telephone and telegraph is inviolable except in cases described by law.

83. Articles 175 of the Criminal Code indicates the following: a person who publicly, orally, in writing or in pictures wilfully insults and denigrates a group of human beings because of their race, their religion or their way of life, shall be punished with maximum imprisonment of one year or a maximum fine of SRD 1,000.

84. Article 175 (a) of the Criminal Code states: a person who publicly, orally or in writing or in pictures, incites to hatred of or discrimination against persons or violent behavior towards persons or property of persons because of their race, religion or way of life shall be punished with maximum imprisonment of two years or a maximum fine of SRD 2,000.

85. Suriname has a multiracial population with a plurality of religions. Peaceful coexistence of the various ethnic groups is therefore of great importance for tranquility in the country. The Criminal Code therefore includes provisions making behaviour that could lead to racial and religious hatred a punishable offence. This is codified in the above-mentioned articles 175 and 175 (a).

86. There are no cases where persons have propagated violent behaviour towards others simply because of race, ethnicity or religion. The ban on hate speech is strictly enforced by the authorities because racial disturbances happening in the region show the necessity of this provision

Article 7: Measures to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among peoples

87. Every year, the different ethnic groups celebrate not only the day of independence, but every race has its own holiday and this is celebrated by everyone in the country, such as abolition of slavery, immigration of the Hindustani, Javanese and Chinese. We also celebrate the day of the indigenous peoples and the day of the Maroons.

88. The general policy of the Government is aimed at measures to combat prejudice which leads to racial discrimination. The policy in the fields of education, culture and information aims to increase the acceptance of different cultures and customs among the population. It is not uncommon to have students from different religions attending a Roman Catholic school or a school run by a Hindu or Islamic organization.

89. With this policy, the Government wishes to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among the different cultures in the State. This will serve as a good basis to establish equal relations of understanding, respect and friendship with people of other nations. The principles and norms as codified in several universal instruments are adopted by the Government of the Republic of Suriname.

IV. Closing remarks

90. As previously noted in this report, the equality of individuals before the law and the right to the protection of the law for all persons is explicitly mentioned in article 8 of the Constitution:

(a) All who are within the territory of Suriname have an equal claim to protection of person and property;

(b) No one may be discriminated against on the grounds of birth, sex, race, language, religious origin, education, political beliefs, economic position or any other status.

91. In 2007, the Ministry of Home Affairs established a Commission on Gender legislation to review the national laws in order to determine whether they create inequality between the men and women and if so instantly modify the specific legislation. This commission was established for six months and was extended to August 2010. The Commission has already concluded its findings in a report and presented this to the Minister of Home Affairs. Currently preparations are being taken to establish a new commission with the important task to harmonize the national legislation with the State's international obligation with regard to gender equality.

92. Owing to the efforts of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Suriname acceded to the Belém do Pará Convention of the Organization of American States in 2002. This Department also drafted a law to explicitly penalize the act of stalking which was adopted by Parliament in July 2009. Within this general framework the State is trying to remove possible inequality between individuals based on their sex.

93. The population of Suriname consists of various ethnic groups which continue to speak their languages, enjoy the culture of their native countries and are permitted to do so freely. As mentioned earlier (see Part I, para. 34 above) the Republic of Suriname is the world in miniature, consisting of Hindustani - 148,443 (27.4%), Creoles - 84,933 (15.7%), Javanese - 73,975 (13.7%), Maroons - 117,567 (21.7%), Chinese - 7,885 (1.5%), Indigenous peoples - 20,344 (3.8), Afro-Surinamese - 3,923 (0.7%), Mixed Race - 72,340 (13.4%), Caucasians - 1,667 (0.3%), Other - 7,166 (1.3%), No race - 1,805 (0.3%), No answer - 1,590 (0.3%) (based on the 2013 Census).

94. Suriname is a multicultural and multilingual society, a fact of which the State is very proud. Its policy is once again aimed at the promotion of cultural democracy. Knowledge of one another's cultural expressions can contribute to mutual understanding, appreciation and advancement of groups, which are preconditions for solidarity.

95. The policy is among other things to maintain records and transfer the material and immaterial cultural heritage of all the cultural groups. The rich variety of cultural values and all other cultural sources can contribute to creativity and national unity for further cultural development, strengthening Suriname's cultural identity.

V. Conclusion

96. The Government of the Republic of Suriname, believing in the basic human rights of any individual, and condemning racial discrimination, tries to comply with its obligations as stated in article 9 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, by submitting these thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth periodic reports in one document.

97. The Government notes, however, that this document is not exhaustive and will most likely not comprise all aspects in the above-mentioned Covenant. The State has tried to implement all the recommendations of the previous concluding observations and also looked into the points of concern of the Committee.

98. However, taking into account the good faith effort of the State to comply with its obligation set forth in the Convention, it will, if requested, be more than willing to supply in writing or orally any additional information with regard to the human rights situation, in particular racial discrimination, in the State.